

Don Corey - Dedication of Mimi Adler's park bench

Mimi Adler was physically a rather small person - perhaps about 5 feet tall - but she was larger than life size in her dedication to special places in Bedford. Her service to the community included many years on the Town Forest Committee, she was a founding member of the Conservation Commission, and then a member of the Open Space Committee, Historical Commission and Historic Preservation Commission. Mimi was honored as Citizen of the Year here in 1990.

Mimi was a Bedford native and knew its special places. She made her mark on many of them. Early on Hartwell Town Forest was one of them. When the old granite horse trough that had stood for over a century at the corner of the Common was discovered in the town dump, Mimi went to Town Meeting with an article. She succeeded in having the trough inscribed with the names of the donors of Hartwell Town Forest to the town and then having it placed there.

Another of her early projects was planting a triangle of flowers by the Hartwell/ South Road intersection, soon followed by another planting nearby. The Garden Club, of which she had been a member since it started, decided to do the same around town. It has become a tradition that we all appreciate.

When the State passed enabling legislation to form Conservation Commissions, Mimi went to the Selectmen to create one here and so became a founding member. She and the other Commission members worked to establish Springs Brook Park and to create the Jenks Nature Trail in front of the High School and Library as an outdoor botany lab. Mimi helped start the community gardens at the Jordan conservation area when the town acquired that parcel. And she is well remembered for chaining herself to one of the beautiful trees along Dudley Road that had to be taken down when the Huckins Farms Condominium development mandated widening of the road. That led to her working to have Dudley Road declared a Scenic Road under State law. Finally, late in life she was remembered for the care of her plantings at Fawn Lake.

Coming back to this mill site, she and Karl had visited the site around 1947 and saw the foundations and ruins left from the mills. When the Vine Brook flood plain upstream from the mill experienced intense commercial development after the construction of Route 3 in the 1950s, Mimi became a very outspoken advocate for protection of this area. I'd like to share with you part of her Letter to the Editor, written almost 50 years ago, which was right on target.

She wrote, "Why must the rape of the Vine Brook continue? In November [1966] the Board of Selectmen called a ... hearing in regard to the alteration of Vine Brook and filling of adjacent swampland. At the hearing, the Conservation Commission discussed the problems, asked that some effort be made to correct the problem, and specifically recommended that the flood plain be left in its natural state to ... accommodate stream flow during periods of heavy rain. ... [Later], the Zoning Board of Appeals conducted a hearing. Again the Conservation Commission appeared to warn of the implications of increased runoff caused by a dredged stream (another one of Bedford's unsightly ditches) ... ". Her letter continued, "More runoff in Vine Brook can mean that the old bridge on Old Burlington Road will be unable to cope with heavy rains. The sad thing is that the additional filling of this small tract may be the "straw that breaks the camel's back" and may result in the replacement of the Old Burlington Road Bridge. This may seem to be a minor thing, but it will mean the complete destruction of the interesting mill ruins".

Filling of the wetlands upstream of the millpond continued. In recent years many of us saw Vine Brook come up in heavy rains, flooding Route 62 in front of Mitre and at least once causing closure of the road. Despite setbacks, Mimi continued to write articles, to organize visits to the mill site, and to hold several Earth Day celebrations here.

As we now know, increased storm runoff pouring through the ravine caused serious erosion and several years ago collapsed some of the mill foundations. The subsequent failure of the bridge and condemnation of the dam by the State were simply the final acts that Mimi predicted long ago. For all of Mimi Adler's contributions to the town and especially to this special place, I'm pleased to dedicate this memorial bench to Mimi.